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ABSTRACT

Criteria used by states for review and approval of academic programs were investigated in 1983 based on a survey of boards of education of states belonging to the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO). The survey revealed an overall increase in state-level program review activity. While the general criteria for program review and approval were very similar from state to state, differences were found for specific indicators of each criterion and the weight given to each criterion. In general, the criteria related to the purposes of the review and the type of board. Typical general criteria included: quality, need/demand, relation to institutional mission, cost for new programs, and productivity for existing programs. The existing and/or potential duplication of a program was also frequently included as an evaluation criterion. There was increasing use of simple outcomes measures (e.g., information on program graduates, success on required professional examinations, entrance to graduate schools) in the review of existing programs. For the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, a chart indicates the authority of the state to recommend, approve, or discontinue programs by type of college/university. Maps also illustrate states where the board has program approval/review authority. (SW)

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STATE LEVEL ACADEMIC PROGRAM
REVIEW AND APPROVAL:
1984 UPDATE

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Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed the development and expansion of statewide governing and coordinating boards for higher education in nearly every state. This development was spurred on in the 1970s by the federal government's role in fostering the development of the so-called "1202" Postsecondary Educational Planning Commissions (McGuinness et al., 1975). The specific responsibilities of the state boards for higher education vary from state to state, but, in general, three major areas have been identified in which most boards have some responsibility. These three areas are budget development, planning, and program review and approval (Berdahl, 1971, and Glenny et al., 1971). Of the three areas, program review and approval, because of its close relationship with the academic function of colleges and universities, has been the most controversial. Earlier studies of state-level program review and approval have noted this controversy and reported the status of state-level review and approval activities (Barak and Berdahl, 1978; Barak and Engdahl, 1980; and Barak, 1979). More recently, several national commissions have addressed the issue of state-level academic program review, thus highlighting this function of state higher education boards (i.e., National Commission on Higher Education Issues, 1982; Education Commission of the States, 1980; Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education, 1980; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1982). This report represents a 1984 update on the status of state-level academic program review and approval.

Past Surveys

In 1978, a comprehensive report on the status of state-level academic program review and approval described, for the first time, the nature and extent of the program review and approval activities of state higher education boards (Barak and Berdahl, 1978). The report noted that in 1975, 47 state boards had

had authority to approve at least some new programs or had authority to review at least some existing programs. With few exceptions, this authority was directed primarily at public colleges and universities. In eight states, this authority was limited to making recommendations to appropriate officials (i.e., the governor, legislature, and institutional boards of trustees and/or officials). In the remaining state boards that had authority for program review and/or approval it was possible for the boards to actually disapprove new programs and/or discontinue existing programs.

Five National Panels Recommend Program Review

Since the Barak and Berdahl study, at least five national panels have addressed the role of the states, and particularly state higher education boards, in program review and approval. While all five were highly supportive of the need for systematic program review, four reports felt that the appropriate focus of this activity should be at the institutional level, while one suggested that the reviews be a cooperative endeavor between the state boards and the institutions. The latter, a panel convened by the Education Commission of the States in 1980, after examining the problems and issues facing the states in the 1980s, concluded that:

With variable enrollments and fiscal stringency, review of existing as well as review of new programs will become progressively important. In some states program review needs to be strengthened and related to the entire planning, budgeting and coordinating process. A fragmented and ad hoc approach will not be helpful in protecting educational values in a period of decline.

1. Program review can help to keep postsecondary education vital by encouraging curtailment or closure of programs that no longer serve student needs and by helping the development of needed new programs. Effective program review must involve both the state higher education agencies and the institutions and combine institutional and statewide perspectives. It should be clearly related to institutional missions.

- For the 1980s proposals for new programs should be carefully developed by the institutions and their planning staffs with special attention to needs, costs and resource reallocation. The state agency should relate program review to state as well as to institutional objectives and thus to the planning process.
 - Review of existing programs, which will receive increased attention during this decade, should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of student need, program duplication and program effectiveness. In light of the deeply engrained reliance in the academic community on peer group evaluation for qualitative judgments, where feasible and possible, careful use of outside consultants should be considered.
2. Program review needs to be developed through the participation of institutions and their faculty and of the statewide higher education agency and with the cooperative reinforcement of the legislative and executive branches of state government. The importance of a state perspective does not mean that the state should carry out academic program review unilaterally. Institutional and faculty cooperation is essential to the integrity of the review process and to the coordination of state and institutional efforts.
- The criteria for program review should be developed jointly by state higher education agencies and institutions. Criteria should be thoroughly understood by administrators, faculty and other interested parties including the executive and legislative branches of state government. The process should be as objective as possible and include conditions for appeal and review.
 - When possible, independent institutions should be given the opportunity and should be encouraged to participate voluntarily in the program review process.
 - Program review should be based on the premise that it is a way to enhance the quality of education as well as a way of controlling costs. However, program review is limited by costs, so careful consideration must be given to a credible process for the selection of programs for review. (Education Commission of the States, 1980, p. XV.)

While the direct involvement of state boards in the program review process was not encouraged by four other national panels composed primarily of representatives of college and universities, there was some recognition that state-level action might be needed in certain circumstances such as large expensive programs and to encourage by various means systematic reviews at the institutions. The Carnegie Council, in its final report, suggested that:

We are doubtful about state-mandated review of academic programs. We believe that such review is better conducted by the institutions themselves, by the accrediting agencies, and by the students making their choices; and we question the wisdom of this great intrusion into academic affairs. While we are against any fine-tuning of academic programs by state action, we recognise that the state may need to step in where there are very expensive large programs (like medical schools) in severe duplication of each other. (Carnegie Council on Higher Education, 1980, p. 124.)

The Sloan Commission, while noting many of the difficulties facing higher education concluded that

The commission recommends that each state arrange for a periodic review of the quality of educational programs at every public college and university within the state. The reviews should be conducted by academic peer groups, not by state employees. To the greatest extent possible, existing accrediting mechanism, such as the regional and professional accrediting associations, should be drawn on to organize and conduct the reviews.

Any governmental effort, whether state or federal, to evaluate the quality of education arouses profound uneasiness throughout the higher education community. It is seen as a threat to institutional autonomy and academic freedom. (Sloan Commission on Government and Higher Education, 1980.)

The National Commission on Higher Education Issues sponsored by the American Council on Education also urged state boards to encourage rigorous institutional program reviews while spelling out a partnership role for state board staff. Specifically, the National Commission recommended

". . . that governing boards ensure that all institutions under their jurisdiction have in place procedures for systematic program evaluation. Coordinating agencies should, appropriately, see that all public institutions and those independent institutions which receive direct state support subject their programs to a rigorous process of evaluation. The actual program evaluations should, however, be conducted at or before the level of the institutional governing board and should include extensive peer group judgments.

Staffs of statewide coordinating boards and other public agencies concerned with higher education can, by wise and diplomatic prodding, become important components of the educational governance structure. Thus, their staff members should be selected and compensated as befits their important role. They should then be treated by university and college leaders in an open and informative fashion as partners rather than as adversaries.

(The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1982, p. 81)

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching took a similar position to that of the National Commission in its recommendations

State officials have generally respected the independence of the campus. Today, however, under the pressure for accountability, the trend is in the opposite direction. Some state agencies have become deeply involved in educational matters, including the evaluation of academic programs (p. 80).

In academic matters, the integrity of the campus should be fully protected. State officials should not involve themselves directly in the review of academic programs. Rather, they should call upon higher-learning institutions periodically to assess such programs and report their findings (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1982, p. 81).

The Present Findings

In July 1983, a survey was distributed to the state higher education boards that are members of the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) for the purpose of ascertaining the current nature and extent of authority of these boards in academic program review and approval. Surveys were sent to all current SHEEO members and responses were received from all but four of these states.*

Three major trends emerge from the survey results. First, there has been an expansion of state higher education board activity and/or authority in program reviews and approval, resulting in an overall increase in state-level program review activity. Secondly, the reviews themselves have become more comprehensive and systemic. Third, the reviews of existing programs appear to be more closely integrated into the planning and budgeting activities of many of the state boards.**

* Information on program review and approval was subsequently obtained through follow-up efforts about the situation in non-responding states.

** It should be noted that in a recent separate study or program review at the institutional level, the author found similar trends. (See Barak, 1982.)

Approximately one quarter of the states reported that their activities and/or authority in the area of program review and/or approval have expanded in recent years. In some states where the board previously had authority for program review but had not exercised it, reviews were now taking place or were under consideration. In other states, new authority for review has been given to the state board. Consequently, the nature of the expansion varies on a continuum ranging from increased attention to the review and approval function to new or expanded statutory authority. Among the reasons given for this expansion of activity were the following:

1. Concerns about academic quality.
2. Desire for greater accountability.
3. Greater financial restraints requiring the careful distribution and redistribution of scarce resources.
4. Need for greater flexibility in retrenchment.

The typical rationale for the expansion of program review activity is perhaps best illustrated by quotations from actual state documents. The recommendations of a study panel in the state of Georgia illustrates the concerns about academic quality and the desire for greater accountability.

QUALITY

The most important task facing the University System in the eighties and beyond is the improvement of the quality of public higher education. The success of the System in the sixties and seventies was often measured by one factor -- growth. To meet dramatic increases in enrollment, programs, facilities, and institutions were added with alacrity. The success of the System in the years ahead will be measured not in terms of growth but in terms of the level of quality by which Georgia's citizens are provided with the knowledge and expertise necessary to address critical social, economic, and technical problems. Each decision made by the Board of Regents must be governed by the principle of quality improvement. The University System must develop the means of evaluating the performance of its institutions against those standards that have been identified as the best nationally.

While adequacy of funding will play an important role in the attainment of an increased level of quality, funding alone is not the only component of a needed program of quality improvement.

The coordinating Committee for the Statewide Needs Assessment recommends that:

- the Governor, the Legislature, and the Board of Regents establish quality improvement as the top priority for public higher education in the state for the eighties and beyond and that this priority be made known to the citizens of the state; that, in so doing, the quality improvement funding recommendations of the Study Committee on Public Higher Education Finance be adopted and implemented.
- the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education expand the present base of cooperation into a wide-ranging creative partnership to examine issues of mutual concern and to develop strategies aimed at the development of excellence in all areas of the educational endeavor; that local school systems and units of the University System develop a systematic mode of communication, allowing frequent exchange of ideas and information and designed to enhance the interdependence of the levels of education they represent.
- University System institutions further develop creative partnerships with local community, business, and industrial leaders to ensure their acquaintance with the problems and potential of each institution and the System, their knowledgeable advocacy of public higher education, and their participation in the formulation of institutional and System goals; that these groups be encouraged to assist the institutions in obtaining private funding support which often spells the difference between adequacy and excellence.
- the Board of Regents develop and implement a system of program evaluation for institutional and System-wide utilization, with the establishment of specific qualitative criteria which lend themselves to measurement; that this system of program evaluation be designed to involve both internal and external evaluation to ensure results that are both disinterested and objective.
- the Board adopt as a long-range goal the elimination of the need for Developmental Studies as that program is currently constituted; that this goal be adopted with the understanding that the results of past deprivation of educational opportunity will long remain and that the need for compensatory education must be met so long as necessary in order not to block access to higher education for those who are capable of eliminating academic deficiencies for which they may not be totally responsible; that close cooperation with the State Board of Education be made the cornerstone for achievement of this goal, recognizing that academic problems are best addressed as they develop, not after-the-fact.

- the Board encourage the reinstitution of specific academic requirements for admission to System institutions to include emphasis on laboratory sciences, foreign languages, mathematics, and writing skills; that the public be made more clearly aware of achievement expectations at the entrance level.
- the Board develop and fund a program of System-wide faculty development designed to ensure that faculty members have adequate opportunity to keep up-to-date in their disciplines and to enhance their teaching skills.

The concerns about quality and accountability are also evident in the quote below from the report and recommendations of a group of consultants engaged to evaluate the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. In addition, this example notes a concern frequently noted elsewhere in which the lack of accountability on the part of colleges and universities (and their respective boards) in undertaking their own rigorous program reviews provides a convenient rationale for others located outside the institutions to take the initiative on the reviews. After noting that the process of program approval (i.e., the review of new programs) is working reasonable well in Alabama, the consultants explain their rationale for a greater commission role in program review.

Program Review and Evaluation

Program evaluation rarely is a simple matter. The process in which a new program begins within the faculty of an institution, moves through peer review, passes administrative scrutiny and board approval, and then is subjected to approval by a statewide commission may reflect several different sets of needs and standards. At each step judgement is made more cautious by the prospect of review. On the whole the system seems to work well in Alabama.

There is far less rationality in the review of existing programs. Most programs serve well because they are kept up to date by faculty interest and an occasional change of course title. Many die quietly for lack of students. Others linger on without much enthusiasm or notice. It is the spectre of those few persistent and marginal courses and programs which disturbs everyone when resources are scarce and needs are great. Thus far the trustees of the institutions have not given the public reason to believe that they are dealing with the problem satisfactorily.

The Alabama Commission is charged with "The use of advisory committees to study needless duplication of education, research, or service programs, and programs which are not adequately provided in the state . . ." Its reports are to go to the institutions, the Governor and the Legislature. New programs are likely to be identified in the planning process through the Council of Twenty-One and other groups. For the Commission to live up to its legislative mandate and for the system to be credible in its stewardship, review of programs which may be unnecessarily duplicating or unproductive needs to be made. The Committee recommends that

THE COMMISSION SHOULD ESTABLISH A PROCESS TO REVIEW EXISTING PROGRAMS AND REPORT ITS FINDINGS TO THE INSTITUTIONS, THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE, AND TO THE PUBLIC.

A third example is indicative of those states where programmatic duplication, generally referred to as "unnecessary duplication," has been a focus of concern. In 1979, the Kentucky Council on Higher Education resolved that a committee should be formed to examine the trends and issues likely to affect Kentucky higher education in the future. In 1981, the committee established for this purpose issued its report In Pursuit of Excellence. The report contained a number of recommendations, several of which were concerned with program review issues. With respect to both Master's and Doctoral programs, recommendations were aimed at ". . . giving specific attention to the identification of program duplication" (p. 65). The report noted that:

In the absence of strong evidence that the duplication of a program is "necessary," the Council should declare it to be "unnecessarily duplicative" and, in the case of a requested new program, deny its approval. In the case of an existing program that is declared to be "unnecessarily duplicative," the Council should withdraw approval, and the institution affected should accept no new students into the program and terminate it when enrolled students have completed their studies (p. 66).

Program Review

Program review of existing academic programs by state higher education boards has grown from only a handful of states in 1960 to forty-three (43) boards in 1983. In addition, there are several state higher education boards that have authority in this area but have not fully exercised that authority to date.

Table 1 shows the number of SHEEO agencies that have authority to recommend and actually discontinue academic programs by sector and type of institution. Sixteen (16) boards have authority for making recommendations for public two-year and four-year institutions, and eighteen (18) for public universities. Only one (1) state has authority to recommend with respect to all independent institutions, and two (2) have recommending authority with respect to some independent institutions.

Table 1
AGENCY PROGRAM REVIEW OF
AT LEAST SOME EXISTING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
AS OF JULY 1, 1983

RECOMMEND ONLY					APPROVE				
PUBLIC			INDEPENDENT		PUBLIC			INDEPENDENT	
2 YR.	4 YR.	UNIV.	ALL	SOME	2 YR.	4 YR.	UNIV.	ALL	SOME
16	16	18	1	2	21	22	23	1	3

The authority to actually discontinue at least some programs exists in twenty-one (21) states for public two-year institutions, and twenty-two (22) for public four-year institutions. Twenty-three (23) states have authority to discontinue public university level programs. Discontinuance authority over the

independent sector is limited to three (3) states with authority to discontinue programs at some institutions, and only one (1) with authority to discontinue programs at all institutions in the state. The states with recommending and discontinuance authority over at least some programs are shown in the map in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows states with authority to review at least some programs in independent institutions.

Program Approval

Program approval is the process by which new programs are proposed and approved or recommended for approval by state postsecondary education agencies. In 1960, there were twenty-four (24) state higher education boards that had at least some program approval authority. In 1983, there were forty-seven (47) state boards that had at least some program approval authority, almost doubling the number in 1960.

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the SHEEO agencies' authority for program approval of at least some academic programs. Seven (7) agencies have authority to recommend approval for public two-year and four-year institutions, and eight (8) have authority for making recommendations for universities. Two (2) states have authority to recommend approval for all independent institutions, and two (2) for some independent institutions. Generally, such authority means that the state higher education board can recommend approval to some other body (i.e., legislature, governing board, etc.).

Approval authority for public institutions exists in thirty-four (34) states for two-year and four-year institutions and in thirty-nine (39) states for universities. Four (4) states have authority to approve new programs for all independent institutions and an additional nine (9) states have authority to approve only some new programs for independent institutions. Usually, the

SHEEO STATES WHERE AGENCY HAS AUTHORITY TO RECOMMEND DISCONTINUANCE OR TO
DISCONTINUE AT LEAST SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

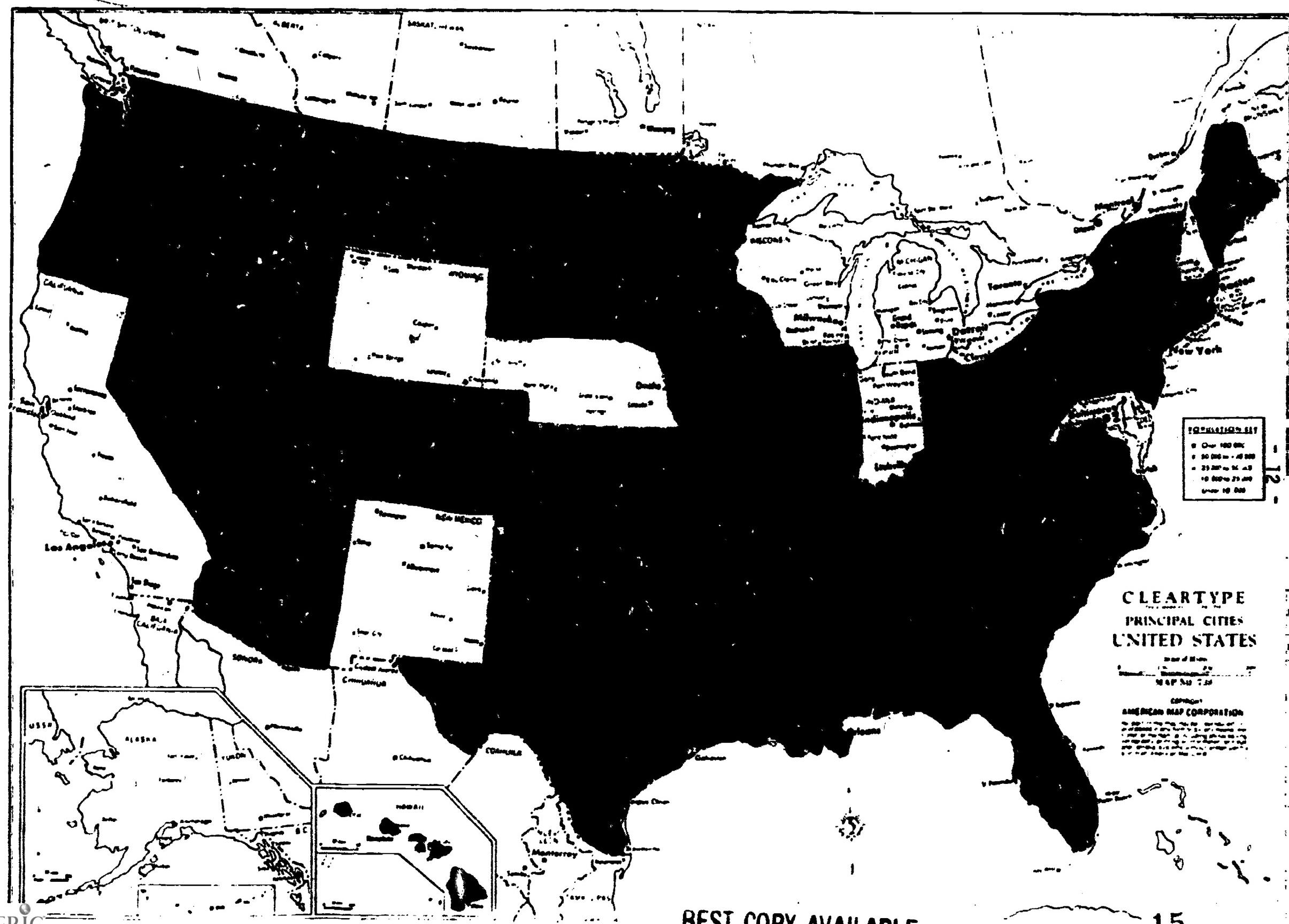
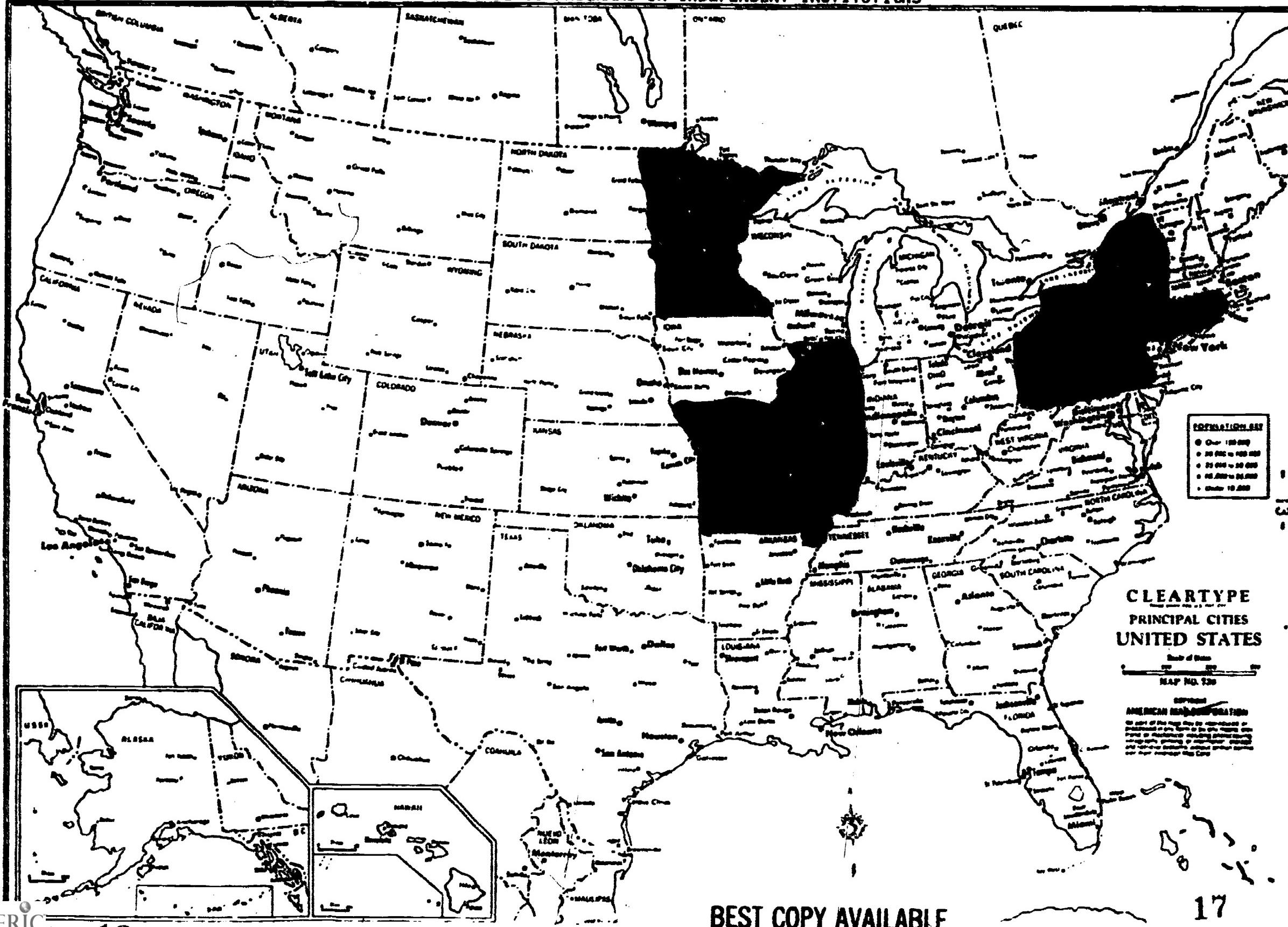


FIGURE 2

SHEEO STATES WHERE AGENCY HAS AUTHORITY TO REVIEW
AT LEAST SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS



latter are indicative of exceptions provided for existing independent institutions at the time that the law is passed, excluding them from the need to seek approval. In other instances, the exceptions represent in-state institutions which are not typically included in regulations requiring licensing and approval of out-of-state institutions wishing to offer courses or programs within a state.

Table 2
SHEEO AGENCY PROGRAM APPROVAL (i.e., NEW PROGRAMS)
OF AT LEAST SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
AS OF JULY 1, 1983

RECOMMEND ONLY					APPROVE				
PUBLIC			INDEPENDENT		PUBLIC			INDEPENDENT	
2 YR.	4 YR.	UNIV.	ALL	SOME	2 YR.	4 YR.	UNIV.	ALL	SOME
7	7	8	2	2	34	34	39	4	9

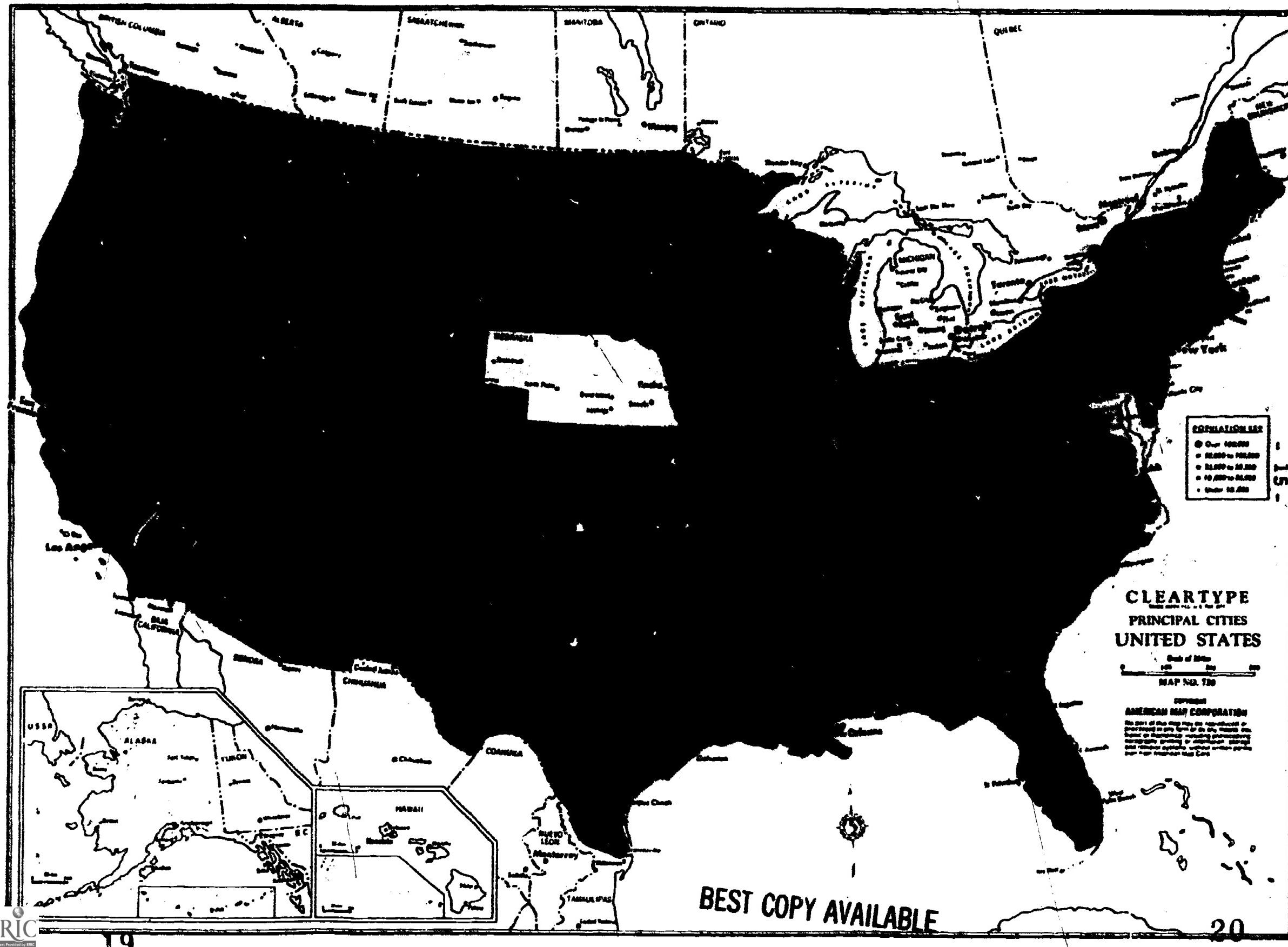
Figures 4 and 5 show a map of the states indicating the states with recommending and approval authority for new academic programs and states with authority over at least some independent institutions.

Purposes of Review and Approval

There are almost as many reasons and combinations of reasons for state board review and approval of academic programs as there are state boards. Typical reasons for review and approval include: maintenance of quality, resource allocation and re-allocation, demonstration of need, consumer protection and accountability. The purposes also vary somewhat by the type of board, with governing boards generally (but not exclusively) more concerned with quality and resource issues, and coordinating type boards more concerned with accountability, state-wide need and consumer protection.

FIGURE 3

SHEEO STATES WHERE AGENCY HAS AUTHORITY TO APPROVE OR
RECOMMEND FOR APPROVAL AT LEAST SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



SHEEO STATES WHERE AGENCY HAS AUTHORITY TO APPROVE OR RECOMMEND
FOR APPROVAL AT LEAST SOME NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

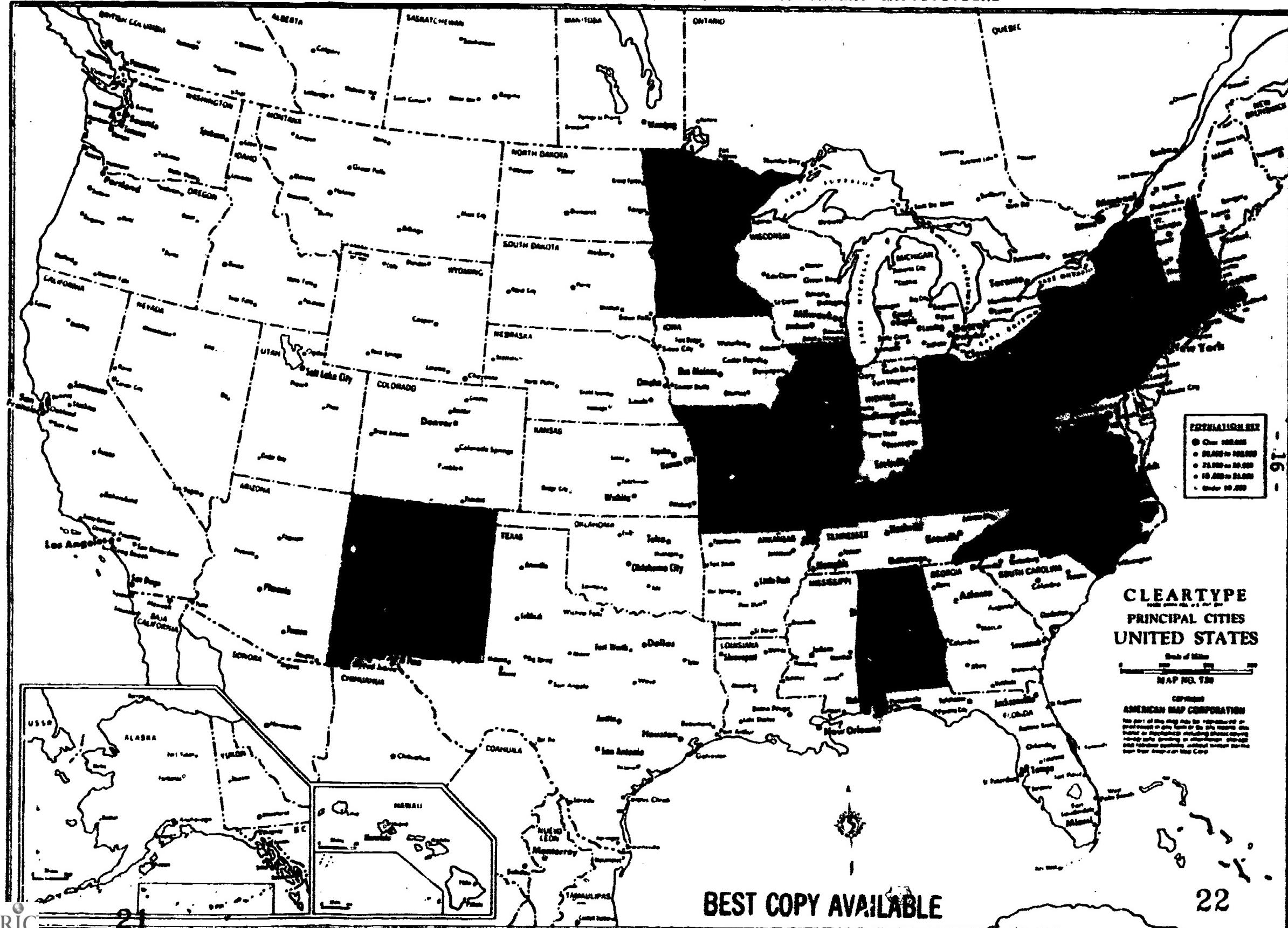


Table 3 shows the review and approval authority by state.

Table 3

SHEEO AGENCY PROGRAM REVIEW/APPROVAL
AUTHORITY FOR AT LEAST SOME ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
as of July 30, 1983

STATE	PROGRAM APPROVAL								PROGRAM REVIEW							
	RECOMMEND ONLY				APPROVE				RECOMMEND ONLY				DISCONTINUE			
	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.
1. Alabama	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Alaska	X	X	X	X												
3. Arizona	X	X	X	X												
4. Arkansas	X	X	X	X												
5. California	X	X	X	X												
6. Colorado																
7. Connecticut																
8. Delaware	X	X	X	X												
9. District of Columbia																
10. Florida																
11. Georgia																
12. Hawaii																
13. Idaho	X	X														
14. Illinois																
15. Indiana																
16. Iowa																
17. Kansas																
18. Kentucky																
19. Louisiana																
20. Maine																
21. Maryland																
22. Massachusetts																
23. Michigan																
24. Minnesota	X	X	X	X												
25. Mississippi																
26. Missouri																
27. Montana																
Nebraska																

STATE	PROGRAM APPROVAL								PROGRAM REVIEW												
	RECOMMEND ONLY				APPROVE				RECOMMEND ONLY				DISCONTINUE								
	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.	PUBLIC	IN-DEP.					
	2 YEAR	4 YEAR	U NIV.	A LL	2 YEAR	4 YEAR	U NIV.	A LL	2 YEAR	4 YEAR	U NIV.	A LL	2 YEAR	4 YEAR	U NIV.	A LL	SOME				
29. Nevada					X		X														
30. New Hampshire									X												
31. New Jersey					X	X	X														
32. New Mexico	X				X	X	X	X													
33. New York					X	X	X	X													
34. No. Carolina					X	X	X			X											
35. No. Dakota					X	X	X				X										
36. Ohio					X	X	X	X				X									
37. Oklahoma					X	X	X					X	X	X							
38. Oregon	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	X				X				
39. Pennsylvania			X		X	X	X					X	X	X							
40. Puerto Rico					X	X	X					X	X	X							
41. Rhode Island					X	X	X					X	X	X							
42. So. Carolina					X	X	X					X	X	X							
43. So. Dakota					X	X	X					X	X	X							
44. Tennessee					X	X	X					X	X	X							
45. Texas					X	X	X					X	X	X							
46. Utah					X	X	X					X	X	X							
47. Vermont					X	X	X					X	X	X							
48. Virginia					X	X	X			X		X	X	X							
49. Washington					X	X	X					X	X	X							
50. West Virginia					X	X	X				X	X	X								
51. Wisconsin					X	X	X					X	X	X							
52. Wyoming																					
TOTALS	7	7	8	2	2	34	34	39	4	9		16	16	18	1	2	21	22	23	1	3

Criteria for Review and Approval

The general criteria for review and approval of academic programs are very similar from state to state, but they differ with respect to the specific indicators of each criterion and the weight given to each criterion. In general, the criteria relate to the purposes of the review and the type of board. Typical general criteria include: quality, need/demand, relation to institutional mission (i.e., centrality), and cost for new programs; and quality, relation to mission (i.e., centrality), need, cost and productivity for existing programs. The existing and/or potential duplication of a program with other similar programs in the state is also frequently included in the criteria by which programs are judged. A trend of sorts that was identified in this study is the increasing use of simple outcomes measures (e.g., information on program graduates, success on required professional examinations, entrance to graduate schools, etc.) in the review of existing programs. About ten (10) states have indicated the use of such measures.

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